



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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February 23, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. RICHARD V. ALLEN
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Paper for the NSC Meeting on El Salvador

Attached is a paper commissioned by the NSC Meeting on February 18 for the upcoming National Security Council Meeting on El Salvador. It was prepared by a senior level interagency group chaired by Deputy Secretary-designate Clark, attended by Dr. Ikle from DOD, General Pustay from JCS, General Schweitzer from the NSC and Mr. Jackson from CIA.

L. Paul Bremer, III
Executive Secretary

Attachments:

1. "El Salvador: Interagency Options Paper for the NSC"
2. List of Attendees

cc: DOD - Dr. Ikle
CIA - Admiral Inman
JCS - General Pustay
NSC - General Schweitzer

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El Salvador: Interagency Options Paper for the NSC

I. Introduction

Our longer term goals in Central America are clear. They include:

-- Support of moderate anti-Communist governments that will produce political change, social reform, and economic growth in an evolutionary way under peaceful and stable conditions.

-- Preventing takeovers by radical Communist governments that, as local surrogates of Moscow and Cuba, could ultimately threaten Mexican and Venezuelan oil, as well as the security of the Panama Canal and the vital interests of the U.S.

The need for immediate additional steps in El Salvador is also clear, but in the case of El Salvador the choice is limited by uncertainties like the ease with which external support can be reduced. The need for an overall regional strategy is clear too, including development of better intelligence information and a comprehensive concept for dealing with the infiltration problem.

In the most optimistic scenario, the provision of ample U.S. military supplies and economic assistance might itself prove sufficient to permit the government to stabilize the situation. However, it may well be necessary for a collective effort, with U.S. assistance, to cut off external support for the guerrillas. To be successful, such an effort will have to go beyond El Salvador, using diplomatic, political, military, and special operations to stop the flow of arms at the source. It should be clear, however, that no repetition of the U.S. experience in Vietnam is proposed or even contemplated.

Although we do not have all the intelligence or all the details of the strategy for dealing comprehensively with the problem, we have enough in hand now to act responsibly on near term needs.

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II. Issues for Decision

A. Military Training

There are 23 US security assistance personnel currently in El Salvador, including the helicopter pilot and maintenance MTTs, the Operational Planning and Assistance Team (OPAT), and the permanent MILGP staff, all stationed in San Salvador or its environs. The NSC has approved the deployment of a six-man Naval MTT and the immediate augmentation of the MILGP staff with a five-man TDY group until permanent personnel can be assigned. That will bring the total number to 34.

While we intend to conduct as much training as possible out-of-country and are currently investigating the feasibility of doing so with selected units, the current emergency has forced the Salvadorans to suspend all out-of-country training temporarily. When we can persuade them to do so, we will emphasize this approach, especially with tactical units. The government has also agreed to reestablish a National Training Center but it will be some time before our training could be concentrated at such a facility. Accordingly, our Embassy, in consultation with Salvadoran military and civilian leaders, has recommended four additional Mobile Training Teams (MTTs), OPAT augmentation and 3 SUTS, bringing total personnel to 54, as the minimum required at this time to begin a basic program to improve Salvadoran military performance. We would assign these military instructors to garrison locations and would expressly prohibit them accompanying Salvadoran troops on combat operations, either offensive or defensive.

Deployment outside San Salvador will add a new dimension to US involvement. It means that US personnel will be brought closer to the areas of combat. Firm rules of engagement would be required to prevent any blurring of the distinction between "trainer" and "advisor." Nevertheless, inadvertent involvement would certainly still be a possibility. While we should be mindful of this possibility, we should also not forget that the MTTs will be in garrisoned areas, which are likely to be more secure than San Salvador. If US personnel do get caught up in direct hostilities, we might have to withdraw them or alternatively address the terms of the War Powers Resolution (see Tab B).

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Option 1. Deploy the additional teams to the garrisons outside San Salvador and where our Chief of Mission may direct.

Option 2. Withhold further deployments of US military personnel to El Salvador.

If Option 1 is chosen, there is interagency agreement that Congress should be consulted.

Option 1. Consult informally with Congress before deploying teams to the Salvadoran garrisons. The present circumstances indicate no need to characterize such consultations as being pursuant to the War Powers Resolution.

Option 2. Consult formally with Congress under Section 3 of War Powers Resolution.

B. Security Assistance Funding

The FY 81 FMS credit and the Sec. 506(a) grant for El Salvador have been fully committed. While the final level of additional funding will depend on the degree of external support for the insurgency, there is consensus that approximately \$50 million will probably be needed over the next 18 months. State has requested \$25 million in FMS financing in our revised FY 82 submission to OMB. However, there is a need for \$25 to \$30 million in additional FY 81 financing; e.g., there is consensus that four additional UH-1H helicopters costing \$7 million are urgently needed to improve GOB ability to move reaction forces. The issue is how to fund these requirements. Not more than \$5 million is available from reprogramming of FMS credits, and the mandatory 15-day notice to Congress of such reprogramming might well trigger Congressional hearings.

Option 1. Reprogram \$5 million in FY 81 FMS. Prepare a Sec. 506(a) determination to make \$20 to \$25 million available on a grant basis. The President would have to certify to the existence of an unforeseen emergency requiring immediate military assistance and that no other legal authority is available to meet it. Both the reprogramming and the determination would have to be notified to the Congress.

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Option 2. Seek an FY 81 authorization and supplemental appropriation for \$20 to \$25 million in direct (fully funded) FMS credits at concessional interest rates (3 to 6 percent) and extended repayment terms. Direct concessional credits are essential because of El Salvador's economic situation, and such credits are not available through reprogramming.

Option 3.* Consult with Congress, pointing out the immediate requirement for helicopters and other equipment, and determine whether greater support exists for Sec. 506(a) determination (which Congress would not have to vote on) or for a supplemental. There is consensus in the IG for this option, and for beginning consultations immediately.

C. Immediate Measures to Improve Infiltration Intelligence

US intelligence on the insurgents' successful infiltration of men and materiel into El Salvador has been poor. However, the El Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans may have a better grasp of the what and where of infiltration. Moreover, it is certain that once a combined regional operation and intelligence effort is pulled together, with US assistance, better information will result with regard to air landings as well as the coastal and land infiltration where current information is the poorest.

We also need improved intelligence to determine if the Nicaraguan Government is in fact honoring its commitment to cease its involvement. With only three weeks remaining of the 30-day testing period we gave the GRN, the requirement is urgent. Although we need more information on where and how infiltration is occurring, some sophisticated US equipment is clearly needed to supplement training of the Salvadoran and Honduran armed forces.

The following actions could be taken with regard to land and sea infiltration.

- 1) Direct the US operations planning team in El Salvador to work with the GOES in planning and executing

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a program to increase intelligence on sea infiltration by establishing lookout posts along the coast. Communication and perhaps radar equipment might be needed from the US. The first stage would be to identify suspicious incoming boats. A second stage might be working with the Salvadoran military to interdict such boats. Besides these actions, we might also consider taking steps to improve the detection/interdiction capabilities of the Honduran navy in the Gulf of Fonseca.

2) Deploy a briefing officer to Honduras to present to the US Ambassador and COMUSMILGP a new proposal for MTTs for the Honduran Armed Forces. Upon Embassy acceptance, deploy a survey team to determine training requirements and composition of follow-on MTTs. Effort will be designed to improve Honduran border patrol and interdiction techniques.

3) Along with Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatamala, we could establish a Combined Intelligence Operations Center (CIOC) in Honduras. Such a center would be responsible for intelligence-sharing, the monitoring of infiltration routes, and developments of plans for combined operations to counter Cuban-Soviet supported infiltration into the region. Recognizing intelligence collecting deficiencies on the part of some of the Central American countries, concurrent actions would have to be taken to assist these countries in correcting their deficiencies. Secure communications equipment would also have to be loaned to these countries to effect the rapid dissemination of information between the CIOC and the nations involved. The United States' role would be restricted to providing real-time intelligence and operational advice. The Central American countries, possibly operating under the aegis of the Central American Defense Council (CONEDCA) would be responsible for committing forces to stop the infiltration. It is also envisioned that with the USG taking lead, other countries (Venezuela and Columbia) would support CIOC. Even though the center is not expected to achieve immediate operational success, its mere presence will provide a badly needed psychological boost to the Latin American countries and will be a physical demonstration of US resolve to counter the threat.

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III. Issues Requiring Further Work and IG Consideration

A. Economic Issues

Present assistance programs of \$63 million for FY 81 are directed primarily at employment generation, support of private sector output, and agrarian reform. Preliminary study indicates that additional US FY 81 assistance in the rough order of magnitude of \$30-100 million will be essential. A team will be returning shortly from El Salvador with a further refinement of our estimates. The increase might include a combination of reprogrammed AID development assistance, supplemental ESF assistance and additional PL-480. We might urge the Export Import Bank to provide additional support.

B. Strategies for the OAS, the UN and Other International Bodies

We would prefer discussion of Cuban and Nicaraguan interference in El Salvador in the OAS rather than the UN, but there are pros (e.g., OAS peacekeeping force) and in some cases serious cons (e.g., dissensus in the OAS and public Mexican opposition) even to OAS consideration that require further consideration and consultation with the GOES. We should consult now with Honduran, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran members of the Inter-American Development Bank to determine how that forum might be used.

C. Information Program for the US and Foreign Publics

A comprehensive public information program for US and foreign media and public opinion and for foreign governments and political leaders is needed and is being developed.

D. Third Country Military Assistance

The feasibility of sharing the burden of military assistance to the GOES with the countries of the region that have similar security interests is under review. Although appropriate for the long term, it is unlikely that a "third country" will jump into the situation now when immediate actions are necessary. We should pursue obtaining the involvement of other Latin American nations but not in place of those actions we know must be taken immediately.

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While a multilateral effort would give the US less control over the military situation, it would increase the morale of the GOES armed forces and could--depending on which countries provide assistance--give GOES efforts more regional and international credibility. The Latin American military has the advantage of language and, often, counter-insurgency experience. However, while many countries have the capability of rendering military aid to El Salvador, most of them now lack the political will and interest to do so. See Tab A.

E. Public Diplomacy and Informational Campaigns

An informational program must be developed to counter Cuban-Soviet efforts in the region. Concurrent with this effort, a program needs to be developed which is directed specifically at the Cuban people and which attributes their current miserable plight to Cuba's surrogate role, Castro's ineptness, etc."

IV. Future Uncertainties and Further Actions

It is the judgment of the interdepartmental group that the fall of the government of El Salvador would represent a major reversal for the United States. We might have been able to maintain a posture of indifference toward the fate of that government had it not been for the large scale and blatant external support for the insurgents. Given that support, it is essential that we not repeat a situation, particularly not in our own hemisphere, of permitting a government to fall because we have denied it legitimate means of self-help while the insurgents have received unlimited assistance from communist countries.

Provision of necessary supplies, training and economic assistance to the Government of El Salvador and serious efforts to curtail outside support to the insurgents, would at least mean that the odds would not be overwhelmingly on the side of the insurgents. Moreover, it would lay the basis for successfully opposing further Cuban advances and for eventually removing Cuban presence from Central America.

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Guerrilla success could be damaging to our strategic position in this hemisphere and elsewhere. For example, it could contribute to instability in other areas along the US "southern flank," e.g., Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, etc. It could jeopardize critical oil and mineral resources, as well as key transportation and communication links. It could eventually force us to tie down forces and expend capital otherwise needed to cope with other threats. And a demonstration of US ineffectuality in dealing with threats close to our own shores could make it even more difficult for us to increase cooperation and confidence among strategically placed countries many times more distant (for instance, in the Persian Gulf).

Although the actions proposed in the paper are limited and urgently needed, it must be noted that we still need to develop a strategy for the long term. There is an additional urgent requirement to define clearly the goals we are prepared to commit ourselves to, the costs we are willing to bear, and our options should initial actions prove less than successful.

The Senior Interagency Group, under Deputy Secretary Clark, should develop for NSC consideration a comprehensive military, political, and information strategy for El Salvador, drawing as appropriate on the papers that have been prepared by the IG/ARA.

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NLS FOO-002# 840BY WET NARA, DATE 6/6/06Third Country Military Assistance1. Increased El Salvador-Honduras Cooperation

Because El Salvador and Honduras have similar civilian-military regimes and share a clear perception of the insurgency threat and the importance to both countries of defeating it, increased cooperation between the two governments is primarily a matter of adequate resources and advice in ordering their priorities. There is consensus that increased Honduran and Salvadoran radar and patrol surveillance of their land and sea borders is essential, and proposals to improve their capabilities and encourage their cooperation are being given high priority. We are already planning counter-insurgency and interdiction training for both the Honduran and Salvadoran armed forces. Similar programs with Guatemala need to be considered as appropriate.

2. Training and Material Assistance From Other Countries

The feasibility of sharing the burden of military assistance to the GOES with the countries of the region that have similar security interests is under review. While a multilateral effort would give the US less control over the military situation, it would increase the morale of the GOES armed forces and could - depending on which countries provide assistance - give GOES efforts more regional and international credibility. The Latin American military have the advantage of language and, often, counter-insurgency experience.

However, while many countries have the capabilities of rendering military aid to El Salvador, most of them now lack the political will and interest to do so. Should the US decide to seek third countries' military help for El Salvador it would have to expend a lot of diplomatic capital to get it and in some cases might have to indirectly underwrite the effort through increased aid to the third country. The following are examples of what might be done on a multilateral basis:

- combined regional intelligence operations center;
- reestablishment of CONDECA (the Central American regional defense association which has been largely inactive since 1969);
- counter-insurgency and interdiction training by such countries as Argentina, Venezuela or Chile.

Venezuela is already providing military advisers, and could be encouraged to increase their number. Because Venezuela is a democracy whose political parties have close ties to the Western

European Christian and Social Democratic parties, there is little risk of adverse reaction to its assistance from El Salvador or among our allies. However, because of the sensitivity of Venezuelan public opinion to involvement in other peoples' wars, the GOV insists on keeping its help quiet, which could prevent significant increases in Venezuela's efforts.

Many of the other proposals have substantial risks and disadvantages which after study we may conclude outweigh the advantage of sharing the burden.

-- Military cooperation by the GOES with conservative military governments such as Argentina, Chile and Guatemala, which are widely viewed in Western Europe and the United States as repressive, could hinder our efforts to characterize the GOES as a centrist, reformist regime.

-- Such cooperation would also damage the GOES' own efforts to win support of the Salvadoran people by linking it with governments similar to the Romero regime overthrown in October 1979.

-- CONDECA was viewed during its active life as an instrument of coordination among the military governments and intelligence services of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Somoza's Nicaragua. To revive it (presumably without Nicaragua) would feed the belief that the US is associated with the imposition of military dictatorships and in particular, that an invasion of Nicaragua is planned. Moreover, the governments are not as compatible as they were when CONDECA was established and all were under full military rule. The costs of some CONDECA activities were covered directly and indirectly by the U.S. and presumably would have to be again.

-- One of the Salvadoran armed forces' most severe problems is logistics and maintenance. These difficulties would be increased by supplies of diverse manufacture, particularly if deliveries were not carefully coordinated. The GOES would much prefer a steady, reliable supply of US equipment and US training.

3. Use of Third Country Troops

We are also examining the capabilities of friendly Latin American countries to provide troops for the defense of El Salvador, if required. However, none of the democratic countries is likely to be able to obtain public or legislative approval to send troops (even as part of an OAS force), and troops from the dictatorships would draw even greater criticism in and out of El Salvador than would be the case for advisers and trainers. The GOES may be opposed to the presence of foreign troops from any source.

The War Powers Resolution (P.L. 93-148) requires that Congress be consulted before U.S. Armed Forces are introduced into hostilities or into a situation where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances, and that the President submit to Congress a report of such an introduction within 48 hours after it has occurred. In any case where such a report is filed (or should have been filed), the continued involvement of U.S. forces must be terminated within 60 days* if Congress has not enacted express statutory authorization by that time, and must be terminated at any time if Congress so directs by concurrent resolution.

In the present circumstances, the proposed deployment of MTTs to regional commands in El Salvador does not appear to involve imminent risk of hostilities. However, such a deployment would increase the exposure of U.S. personnel to such a risk. In this regard, the U.S. personnel would be in close physical proximity to potential hostilities, and in the company of Salvadoran personnel who might become engaged in hostilities. The War Powers Resolution defines an "introduction" of U.S. Armed Forces as including the coordination or accompanying of foreign forces in hostile situations.

Prior consultations with Congress could be helpful in avoiding or responding to assertions that a War Powers Report should be filed immediately. Consultations might also gain Congressional support that will be needed in the event that a subsequent change of circumstances gives rise to the need for a War Powers Report and for legislation authorizing a continued U.S. military presence in El Salvador.

* The 60 day period may be extended to 90 days to permit the safe withdrawal of U.S. personnel.

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